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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: USAID/IREX OPENS EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY CENTER
AT SUPREME COUNCIL

REF: A. ASHGABAT 710

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1227

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (U) SUMMARY: On October 15, USAID and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) formally opened a Center for Interactive Multimedia Learning at Turkmenistan's Supreme Council on Science and Technology (SCST). The center will help prepare educators and specialists to use computer technologies and the Internet in the classroom, furthering their professional development. The new center is one of five in Turkmenistan that are administered by IREX under the USAID-funded Internet Access and Training Program (IATP). The Deputy Chairwoman of the Supreme Council stressed in her remarks that she sees the center's opening as "only the beginning" of possible expanded cooperation with this influential entity, which has been tasked by President Berdimuhamedov with implementing important parts of his plans to introduce international standards across the education, science, and research sectors. END SUMMARY.

CENTER SUPPORTS KEY PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITIES

[1](#)3. (U) Education and technology development are priorities for the Government of Turkmenistan, which has called for computers and Internet to be available in every school across the country. The IATP program, which has been operating in Turkmenistan since 2000, provides technical assistance in integrating information and communications technologies into education and also provides civil society organizations and community leaders with tools that are otherwise either largely inaccessible or under-utilized. The program trains over 100 Turkmen citizens per month. Its network of multimedia learning centers has already provided computer and internet services to over 15,000 in Ashgabat, Turkmenabat, Dashoguz, and Balkanabat.

[1](#)4. (U) The new multimedia learning center is equipped with nine computers connected to the high-speed Internet through the Virtual Silk Highway network, as well as cutting-edge educational technologies like an interactive blackboard. USAID/IREX specialists will train the Supreme Council members and staff, as well as Turkmen educators at all levels, to use computer-based technologies and interactive, student-centered methods in the classroom. Trainees will have the opportunity to create digital lessons, join online discussions, and learn how to connect students with their peers in

other countries over the Internet.

15. (U) As a next step, after approximately one year of cooperation, the project will organize a conference for educators and professors from selected regional educational departments, universities, institutes, and secondary schools. This conference will demonstrate to educators and others the results of the project's center, and participants will learn about the opportunities available through the project. Over time, IREX will establish relationships with additional stakeholders to expand during a possible second phase by establishing pilot centers in one to two provincial cities.

16. (U) COMMENT: President Berdimuhamedov has repeatedly stressed the development of education, science and technologies, and has ordered large purchases of computers for schools across Turkmenistan. The Internet plays a growing role in the education process, but to maximize this opportunity, educators must also be comfortable with the latest interactive methods and technologies in the classroom. This center will help spread these modern approaches to teaching professionals.

17. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: The Supreme Council has been very receptive to expanded cooperation with USAID and other USG entities. Although its Deputy Chairwoman and key SCST staff privately acknowledge the challenges in developing the education sector due to the obstructive role of the Ministry of Education, they continue to look for ways to work within existing limitations by exercising the Supreme Council's mandate to introduce and promote new technologies. USAID plans to build on this opportunity by working with the Supreme Council in its efforts to introduce International Financial Reporting Standards in the curriculum of Turkmenistan's higher education institutions. (Reftel B) END COMMENT.

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